

# Healing & Reconciliation: Will Jackson & Farrakhan Be Next?

One of the most positive outcomes of the healing/reconciliation underway between Minister Louis Farrakhan and Dr. Betty Shabazz is the prospect that principled healing/reconciliation can occur between other individuals, organizations and movements within the national Black community. In that regard, one of the most disappointing and damaging ruptures to occur in the last decade is the split/division between the two preeminent African American leaders of this era, Rev. Jesse Jackson and Min. Farrakhan. Despite the *State of Emergency* afflicting the masses of African people in the US and the world these extraordinary leaders, both of whom have programs for moving the race forward, seldom share the same platform and are not working together on any joint initiatives or programs.

The split between Rev. Jackson and Min. Farrakhan goes back to events which transpired during the 1984 Jesse Jackson for President Campaign. Profoundly impressed by Rev. Jackson's presidential crusade, Min. Farrakhan registered to vote for the first time and publicly endorsed Rev. Jackson for President. This was an unprecedented act for a leader of the Nation of Islam. Thousands of members of the Nation followed Min. Farrakhan's lead and registered to vote.

In the early stages of the campaign when Rev. Jackson received numerous death threats, it was not the US Secret Service but the Fruit of Islam which wrapped a protective blanket of security around Rev. Jackson and his campaign. At Rev. Jackson's invitation, Min. Farrakhan joined him on the campaign trail for a series of electrifying campaign rallies. The sight of these two dynamic African leaders campaigning together was one of the most inspiring and uplifting moments of our time. Regrettably, unity between these two great leaders did not last.

When Rev. Jackson privately referred to New York City as "hymietown," a remark which the Jewish community viewed as highly derogatory and offensive, the Jackson-Farrakhan union began to fall apart. Rev. Jackson correctly apologized to the Jewish community for this denigrating remark. But when many within the Jewish community refused to accept Rev. Jackson's apology and continued to attack him, Farrakhan went on the offensive in Rev. Jackson's defense. Indeed, most Black people felt



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that the Jewish reaction to Rev. Jackson's private comments was excessive. While Rev. Jackson continued to apologize profusely, the majority of Jews remained hostile and unforgiving.

Unfortunately, Farrakhan's furious defense of Rev. Jackson included some sweeping generalizations and statements which were widely viewed as anti-Semitic. This created a further embarrassment for Rev. Jackson, who in an effort to salvage support among Jews and rescue a reeling campaign issued a stinging repudiation of Min. Farrakhan. Rev. Jackson moved decisively to distance himself from the man who had enthusiastically endorsed his campaign and deployed the Fruit of Islam to defend/protect his life. Rev. Jackson felt that his campaign was endangered. Min. Farrakhan felt betrayed.

There are legitimate philosophical and political differences between Rev. Jackson and Min. Farrakhan which surfaced as a result of the events of 1984 and thereafter. However, the wedge which was driven between these two outstanding leaders and their constituencies within the Black community was/is really a consequence of the interests and dictates of forces external to the Black community. Hence, Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, the leader who stands in the great tradition of Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Dubois, and Martin Luther King remains as odds with Min. Louis Farrakhan, the leader who stands in the great tradition of Martin R. Delany, Marcus Moriah Garvey, Nannie Burroughs, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X.

Cognizant of the negative



MIN. FARRAKHAN

impact of these kinds of splits historically within the Black community, many scholars, activists and organizers yearn for unity and cooperation between these two great traditions and Rev. Jesse Jackson and Min. Farrakhan, the leaders who are the most dynamic contemporary representatives/spokespersons for these traditions. There is no more urgent task in this period than the creation of an effective united front and joint work among Black leaders and organizations within the African community in the US.

Within a united front there can be "unity without uniformity." Operational unity, probing for areas of agreement and areas for collective work is the basis for principled unity, cooperation and action. Organizations and leaders are not required to abandon their philosophical or political differences nor are they required to surrender the right to engage in debate and criticism in order to work together. The concept of operational unity allows for debate and criticisms to be aired in a manner which can be positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive.

A rapprochement between Rev. Jackson and Min. Farrakhan coupled with the healing of divisions among other organizations and leaders might set the stage for the kind of united front that could develop effective strategies to carry the race forward into the 21st century. Let us hope that the move toward healing and reconciliation by Dr. Shabazz and Min. Farrakhan will generate momentum for principled healing and reconciliation between Rev. Jesse Jackson and Min. Farrakhan. The destiny of the race demands it!

## Open Letter To The Community

Dear Concerned Citizens:

A new generation of youth business and work program is being established in the community called Inner-City Youth Development Self-Help Business Foundation. The next 24 months will be critical for our youth and people in general, all over the country. We must stop depending on the city, county and federal government. We as a people must establish our own programs and employment. We are the largest single group of people living in the inner-city limits of Buffalo - over 100,000 strong. We shouldn't have to depend on any outside source. We have the manpower to do almost anything we want to, provided we stick together.

I've lived in Buffalo over 47 years and from what I've seen, there's not been much progress made in all that time. I'm very discouraged, to say the least, with the way my people have been distancing themselves from one another. There's always that outer resentment and distrust among one another. The East Side of Buffalo is facing a major crisis among our youths. Gang activity, drugs, prostitution, and drive-by shootings are more widespread than ever before. There aren't enough jobs and too much recreation. The government hasn't been able to develop programs that successfully deal with these issues. As a long-time resident of Buffalo, I've witnessed the decline of the moral standards and unity and self-respect of people in our community. I can, therefore, state firmly that I have a good idea of what kind of program might be best to address our current concerns for our youth; a program based on the concept of building self-esteem with the purpose of building self-respect and responsibility.

Inner-City Youth Development Self-Help Business Foundation will be a community development effort. Its ultimate goals and objectives seek and rely on the use of the old phrase "people need people." The youth develop-

ment self-help projects will involve first, the love of people, and then the following things: law and order; manufacturing, processing and resource center; and using resourceful and professional persons. The program foundation will be by the strictest definition: A formal business organization with a relationship of two or more people working together under leadership, in an environment with other resources to accomplish objectives; development and ownership of small businesses. The main economic future of East Buffalo is *individual* ownership of small businesses. This message comes as a direct appeal to people of this community and people everywhere to join us, to support us, and to help us by giving of yourself, your time, your finances, your energy and your care. Use your creativity and put your talents to good use by joining the efforts of East Buffalo youth development programs.

It wasn't politics or religion - just a game the White man used on Blacks over 250 years ago. When he'd go away on business, he'd have a hundred slaves watching one another. This caused fear, resentment and mistrust of one another. We're still constantly plagued with those emotions, even up to this day in 1995. Some of us, young and old alike, are still trapped in that slave mentality. But we *can* get out of it.

I'm asking everyone concerned - especially business and professional people to rally behind me and together we can get this program off the ground. The four main ingredients to be an effective community organizer are: honesty, compassion, sincerity and dedication.

Within the next 12 months there will be fundraising drives, sales, raffles, etc. - please *participate!* If interested, please feel free to contact me at 854-8551 between 9am-5pm, Monday through Saturday. Ask for John Young.

- John Young

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